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LETTER DATED 6 NOVEMBER 1997 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 6 November 1997 addressed to you by Mr. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq. The Minister gives the reasons for the removal of certain items of equipment subject to monitoring from their former locations lest they be destroyed in some new United States military aggression, as was the case when the Americans attacked the Al-Nida' Establishment with long-range missiles in 1993, and also gives assurances that these items shall not be used for any proscribed activity during the time in question.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Saeed H. HASAN
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex

Letter dated 6 November 1997 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq addressed to the President of the Security Council

With reference to the letter dated 5 November 1997 from the Executive Chairman of the Special Commission addressed to you (S/1997/851), we should like to state as follows:

1. Iraq did not prevent the monitoring groups from conducting their inspection visits but only requested the American not to enter. The groups in question did not accede to this request, however, and they withdrew on instructions from the Executive Chairman of the Special Commission. The Executive Chairman therefore bears full responsibility for his instructions preventing the inspection teams from performing their tasks.

2. As you know, the circumstances we are currently experiencing are exceptional and are those of an emergency arising out of the possibility of military aggression by the United States of America against Iraq. We have therefore taken certain measures. They involve, to be precise, the removal to distant sites of items of equipment that might be subject to military attack, as was the case in 1993 with the missile attack on the Al-Nida' Establishment. We shall return these items to their places, as we did in 1993, and we shall invite the monitoring teams to inspect them and authenticate them. We give our assurances that the items shall not be used for any proscribed activity during this time.

3. None of the Special Commission's monitoring cameras have been tampered with. There was, however, an accident at the Al-Mu'tasim site during a static test of two rocket engines for the non-proscribed 50-kilometre-range Ababil-50 missile. This was being conducted as part of the maintenance plan familiar to the MG-15 monitoring group at the Baghdad Monitoring and Verification Centre, subject to declarations being made and in accordance with formats devised by the Special Commission. An engine exploded while in operation on the test stand and this damaged some equipment at the site, including cameras belonging to the Iraqi side and a monitoring camera belonging to the Special Commission. The MG-15 group was notified accordingly by the National Monitoring Directorate by an official letter dated 6 November 1997.

We should like to assure you that we are honouring our obligations under the monitoring plan approved by Security Council resolution 715 (1991).

(Signed) Mohammed Said Al-SAHAF
Minister for Foreign Affairs of
the Republic of Iraq